

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held September 19, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 6:00 PM at Barre City Hall, Barre, Vermont. In attendance in person or virtually were: From Ward I, Councilors Emel Cambel and Thom Lauzon; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storrellicastro, Assistant Manager Dawn Monahan, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Fire Chief Keith Cushman, Firefighter Marcel Brault, Public Works Director Brian Baker, Water Treatment Plant Chief Operator Jake Drown, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Others Present: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: Ratification of United Steelworkers collective bargaining agreement added to consent agenda.

Visitors and Communications

Fire Chief Keith Cushman introduced new firefighter Marcel Brault, who grew up in Barre and graduated from Spaulding High School two years ago. Councilors welcomed FF Brault, wishing him well and to stay safe as he begins his service with the City.

Steve Finner said he was responding to last week's discussion on a proposed charter change limiting committee and board memberships to City residents. Dr. Finner said membership is more nuanced, and there are some committees and boards where Barre Town residents are appropriate. He suggested creating a 5-person ad hoc group to review the current board and committee makeups and charges, and make recommendations on which ones are appropriate for mixed residency, and which should be limited to City residents. Dr. Finner said he would be willing to serve on such an ad hoc group.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

Council approved the following consent agenda items on motion of Councilor Cambel, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

- A. Approval of Minutes as corrected:
 - i. Regular meeting of September 12, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2023-38, dated September 19, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$438,985.44
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$139,896.66
- C. 2023 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Authorize the Manager to execute contract(s)
 - i. Sage Carpentry – City Hall and Public Safety Building Flood Repair
- E. Ratification of United Steelworkers collective bargaining agreement. (added under adjustments)

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes reported on the following:

- First quarter property tax installments are due by October 2, 2023.
- Water/sewer bills are due by October 2, 2023.
- Accepting abatement requests from flood-impacted property owners. Have received 43 to date.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storrellicastro reported on the following:

- The City will be receiving a federal grant in the amount of \$22,000 to assist in the purchase of police body cameras. There is also a funding request pending with the state.
- There will be no parking on N. Main Street tonight and tomorrow night to allow for street sweeping in advance of this weekend's Heritage Festival.
- Landslide reviews are ongoing. The Pike Street reviews are pushed out while the geotechnical engineer looks to engage a driller to test the slope.
- Repair and construction work on Berlin Street will likely continue into next week.

New Business –

A) Water system update.

Manager Storrellicastro gave a Powerpoint presentation on the water system including the following:

- There was extensive system disruption leading up to and following the flooding. This caused turbidity at the treatment plant, which resulted in a boil water notice, and water discoloration.
- Efforts to mitigate the continuing impacts on the system include extended flushing, draining of the Pierce Road tank, and significant testing. Testing has indicated the water is safe.
- Localized discoloration continues, and is being researched by the City and state officials. It's possible the discoloration is caused by slightly elevated manganese levels, which are safe. Testing continues and the results remain within safe limits.
- Water & sewer rates were increased in August, effective with the September invoices. Increases in the rates help equalize the water and wastewater funds, and keep up with costs and capital needs.

The Manager said to date there have been 52 water bill abatements associated with increased usage due to flooding damage or cleanup, equaling approximately \$52,000.

B) FY24 budget update.

The Manager gave a Powerpoint presentation on the FY24 budget, and projected impacts due to flooding and storm damage, including:

- Recap of the FY24 budget, including fixed costs and revenue sources.
- Impacts from the flood on revenue reductions and expense increases estimated to be over \$2M.
- Impacts on cash flow, and approaches to stabilize finances, including:
 - Eliminating and freezing discretionary spending
 - Delaying expenses
 - Managing cash flow
 - Long term solutions

Councilors asked for data on the number and value of the properties that might be categorized as Substantially Damaged, and how many are adjacent to waterways. Such a list is in the process of being developed.

Cat Allen asked if the parking program covers expenses associated with parking enforcement. It was noted funds raised through parking meters, tickets, and permits more than cover expenses, and help cover costs associated with maintaining municipal parking lots.

There was discussion on one-time vs. operational expenses, matching funds, and bonding to cover flood-related expenses.

C) Volunteer Appointments:

i. Recreation & Parks Committee – Cat Allen

Council approved Ms. Allen’s appointment on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

ii. Development Review Board – Jayme Bauer

Council approved appointment of Ms. Bauer on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

iii. Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee – Mark Martin

Council approved appointment of Mr. Martin on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

iv. Transportation & Public Works – Steve Mackenzie

Council approved appointment of former City Manager Mackenzie on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

D) Green Mountain Transit update on service reductions.

GMT general manager Clayton Clark and Washington County board commissioner Christian Meyer addressed the Council. Mr. Clark reviewed previous service reductions tied to staffing shortages, and partial service restorations earlier this year. He said service was again impacted by staffing shortages earlier this month, but they are now fully staffed, and expect to have services restored by the end of the calendar year. Mr. Clark said the board of commissioners approved a significant hourly wage increase for drivers at their last meeting, which will help with driver recruitment. He noted returning to full service does not include restoration of the first and last runs of the day on the City route, as those will require applying for new service instead of service restoration.

There was discussion on the interplay between seasonal service in the Stowe region and commuter service in the Barre area; how the current routes don’t allow timely connections with the commuter bus to Burlington; why the first and last runs of the day are considered new service when they have been included in the daily schedule in the past; and how to cut through the red tape and get the service restorations done.

Jesse Rosado said the board is heavy-handed, and is interested in treating the request as a new route to allow for grant-seeking. Mr. Rosado said transportation needs in the Stowe Mountain region have taken priority, and there is a correlation between increases in service in the Stowe area and decreases in service in the Barre area. He said GMT is chasing the funding, and bus routes are lifelines in the Barre community.

There was discussion on micro-transit options; how to get the board to support the service increase/restoration request; crossed communications in the past between the board, residents and the Council; working through the board’s process for service requests; and the labor intensive nature of medical transport.

Ericka Reil said My Ride service in Montpelier requires a phone, and not everybody has one. Ms. Reil said they have been trying to work the kinks out of the system for five years.

There was discussion on the amount of municipal funding support paid by Barre City covering 6% of service costs, and including the City’s service restoration request on an upcoming GMT board meeting agenda.

To be approved at 10/10/23 Barre City Council Meeting

Councilor Boutin made the motion to have City staff reach out to the GMT board to request time at a future meeting to discuss restoration of the first and last runs on the City route, seconded by Councilor Lauzon.

Cat Allen said there are ways to apply pressure on the board through media and social media.

Councilor voted on the motion as presented. **Motion carried.**

E) 1st Reading and Public Hearing Warned 6:46 PM: Accessory Dwelling Unit Zoning Revision.

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to approve the draft revisions and move them to a 2nd reading and public hearing, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.

Councilor Lauzon said he's in favor of ADU's, but would like to keep the language that requires parking and includes a waiver option. There was discussion on changing current unified development ordinance language to require only 1 parking space instead of 1.3 spaces.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to amend the original motion to make ADU approval subject to the parking language included in UDO section 3104, with the language adjusted to require 1 parking space instead of 1.3 spaces. The motion was seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion did not pass with Councilors Lauzon, Boutin and Deering voting in favor, and Mayor Hemmerick and Councilors Cambel, Stockwell and Waszazak voting against.**

Amy Galford asked if the ADU language includes language related to curb cuts. Planning Director Janet Shatney said additions of or changes to curb cuts would require permitting outside of ADU permitting.

Council voted on the original motion. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick and Councilors Cambel, Stockwell and Waszazak voting in favor, and Councilors Lauzon, Boutin and Deering voting against.**

F) Appeal to Council of 7/31/23 Mayoral Proclamation to request approval of the demolition of 561 N. Main Street.

David Ayer, owner of 561 N. Main Street, requested approval of his demolition permit application for the building at said property. Mr. Ayer said following a review of the building by an insurance inspector and a builder, he has been advised not to enter the structure, as it is unsafe and unsalvageable. He said he plans on making a parking lot out of the area and installing three EV charging stations, with the possibility of expanding to 10 stations in the future.

There was discussion on the loss of housing units if the building is demolished, difficulty finding an engineer to conduct an inspection, the cost of restoring the property exceeding income value, increasing needs for EV charging stations, review of the Mayor's proclamation related to retaining housing, and length of time the local emergency order will be in effect. It was noted a 2/3 majority of the Council is required to approve demolition under the Mayor's proclamation.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to authorize demolition of 561 N. Main Street, seconded by Councilor Deering.

James Martin said he is a builder, and he toured the building. Mr. Martin said it is not restorable and is in danger of collapse in the near future.

There was discussion on the impact on the grand list, and a possible demolition request coming for the Italian Baptist Church on Brook Street.

To be approved at 10/10/23 Barre City Council Meeting

Council voted on the original motion. **Motion carried.**

Upcoming Business –

- Next Council meeting is October 3rd. It will only include an executive session.
- Next regular Council meeting is October 10th. There will be additional committee appointments for consideration, and ratification of today's approval of the USW CBA.

Round Table –

Councilors said they're looking forward to this weekend's Heritage Festival, which had been rescheduled following the July flooding.

Councilor Deering said the Spaulding High School football team held a coin drop last Saturday and raised nearly \$4,000. Both BYSA football teams played last week and won their games.

Councilor Stockwell said positive volunteer and community activities make the best anti-poverty programs.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk